

Macaulay's touch becomes lighter. The description of William Paterson and Fletcher of Saltoun, in the account of the genesis of the Darien scheme, is an excellent example. There is a piquant contrast between the two visionaries—the patriot and the projector—who for a moment became confederates and half ruined Scotland between them.

These eccentric men soon became intimate. Each of them had his monomania ; and the two monomanias suited each other perfectly. Fletcher's whole soul was possessed by a sore, jealous, punctilious patriotism. His heart was ulcerated by the thought of the poverty, the feebleness, the political insignificance of Scotland, and of the indignities which she had suffered at the hand of her powerful and opulent neighbour. When he talked of her wrongs his dark meagre face took its sternest expression : his habitual frown grew blacker ; and his eyes flashed more than their wonted fire. Paterson, on the other hand, firmly believed himself to have discovered the means of making any state which would follow his counsel great and prosperous in a time which, when compared with the life of an individual, could hardly be called long, and which, in the life of a nation, was but as a moment.¹

The great projector was the idol of the whole nation. Men spoke to him with more profound respect than to the Lord High Commissioner. His antechamber was crowded with solicitors desirous to catch some drops of that golden shower of which he was supposed to be the

dispenser. To be
 seen walking with him in the High Street, to
 be honoured
 by him with a private interview of a quarter
 of an hour,
 were enviable distinctions. He, after the
 fashion of all the
 false prophets who have deluded themselves
 and others,
 drew new faith in his own lie from the
 credulity of his
 disciples. His countenance, his voice, his
 gestures, indicated
 boundless self-importance. When he
 appeared in
 public he looked,—such is the language of
 one who pro-

¹ VI, 2908 (xxiv).